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ABSTRACT

An approach to translation is discussed which takes into account the sociolinguistic factors involved in a translated document designed for use with a linguistically, culturally and educationally heterogeneous population, such as the U.S. Spanish-heritage community. The translation project described resulted in the Spanish-language questionnaire for the Survey of Income and Education (SIE), which was conducted during the spring of 1976. As background, the language and cultural variation among Spanish-speaking groups is discussed. Because of this diversity, it was felt that the questionnaire should evidence sociolinguistic sensitivity. The project itself had two objectives: to make the Spanish both appropriate and acceptable to most of the Spanish-speaking populations in the United States, and to make the translation as useful as possible to the Bureau of the Census. The consensus translation process, by which these objectives were achieved, is described in detail. It involved: (1) the selection of a team of translators from different U.S. Hispanic communities who were trained linguists experienced in translating; (2) initial translation of the SIE documents into Spanish by one translator; (3) back-translation of the documents into English by all the translators; and (4) a series of meetings of the translation team to develop and refine the translation. Issues and problems concerning format and style are also described, and guidelines used in their resolution are given. The consensus translation process demonstrated in this project is felt to provide a potential model for all large-scale surveys involving Spanish-speaking groups. It is recommended that several needs discovered during the project (such as specialized glossaries and special training for bilingual interviewers) be explored to make the consensus translation process more effective. (AMH)

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CONSENSUS TRANSLATION: A SOCIOLINGUISTIC APPROACH TO THE TRANSLATION OF COMMUNITY ORIENTED DOCUMENTS

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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FOREWORD

The Survey of Income and Education (SIE) had its genesis in the mandate in Section 822(a) of the Education Amendments of 1974, P.L. 93-380, to the Secretary of Commerce to do a new study of the number of children in poverty in the United States in connection with Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. Taking advantage of the large sample which would be provided for this survey, and the possibility for increased reliability for State and National estimates, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and several other agencies of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare arranged with the Bureau of the Census to add questions which would meet their survey needs. The interest of NCES was for data which would enable it to respond to its mandate contained in Section 731(c) of the Bilingual Education Act, Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended by P.L. 93-380. This mandate required NCES to conduct a survey to count the number of limited-English-speaking children and adults from language backgrounds other than English in the Nation. For this purpose a set of questions relating to the current language usage and language background of the population and a series of questions designed to elicit information about English proficiency were added to the SIE. The series of questions on English was called the measure of English language proficiency (MELP). To develop and validate it, NCES entered into a contract with the Center for Applied Linguistics in the Spring of 1975.

Although the preparations for the SIE were undertaken before House Joint Resolution 92 with its requirement on the use of Spanish language questionnaires became law as P.L. 94-311, it was already apparent from the Decennial Censuses and various surveys that the major minority language group to be reckoned with was the Spanish-speaking one. In addition, NCES determined that, to achieve the purposes of the part of the SIE relating to limited English-speaking among the

Spanish-speaking, a standard form of the SIE questionnaire and other documents in Spanish should be provided. Accordingly, NCES amended the contract with the Center for Applied Linguistics to enable it to assemble a group of translators representative of the major Spanish-speaking subgroups and to prepare a Spanish language translation. The translation included in this publication is the result.

The SIE was carried out with interviews conducted in approximately 160,000 households during the months of April to June, 1976. NCES does not know to what extent the translation proved valuable to Census interviewers working in the field. However, the process whereby a version of the questionnaire was developed which would be understood in the same way by all speakers of Spanish in the United States has great relevance for future efforts of this kind. It has special relevance in the light of P.L. 94-311. NCES is, therefore, pleased to make available to the public the report of this process and the considerations which governed the final product, as well as the final product itself. The report was written by Leann Parker, Center for Applied Linguistics, Project Coordinator for the SIE Spanish Translation Project. We are grateful to her, to others of the CAL staff who worked on the project, and to the outstanding group of translators assembled by CAL who gave so much time, thought, and effort to it.

Dorothy Waggoner
Co-Director, Bilingual Studies Group
National Center for Education Statistics

PREFACE

Translation has traditionally been regarded as such a mechanical process that those who practice it generally receive little social or monetary recognition for their skills. A translator's very existence, in fact, is often not even consciously noted by the users of the product (unless a mistake) and compensation is all too often on a par with manual labor. The implicit idea is that all one needs to know to be able to translate is how to speak a language. As a result, there are few standards for translators, and the quality and accuracy of translations is rarely questioned.

Linguists -- and the Center for Applied Linguistics -- have long been aware of the truly enormous complexities involved in translation, and have attempted in various ways to educate potential users about these complexities. At the same time, the Center has been concerned about ways to assist translators themselves to better understand the nature of the task they are called upon to do.

This publication, and the project from which it grew, documents an approach to translation which we have termed "consensus translation". This approach takes into account the sociolinguistic factors involved in a translation designed for use with a linguistically, culturally, and educationally heterogeneous population such as the U.S. Spanish-heritage community. The contrast between an ordinary translation and a sociolinguistically sensitive consensus translation may perhaps best be highlighted by the fact that in this project, the former required a day to complete, and the second several days. The moral for potential users is Caveat emptor: where civil rights, legal questions, or the delivery of health and social services may be at issue, a sociolinguistically uninformed translation may indeed prove false economy. As Eugene Nida has said, a translation which the user does not understand is a bad translation.

The Center for Applied Linguistics is pleased to present this report, in the hope that it may increase the recognition by users and translators

alike of the importance of sociolinguistic factors in translation, and contribute to improving the standards and appropriateness of translations prepared for minority groups in the U.S.

Rudolph C. Troike
Director
Center for Applied Linguistics

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Without the dedication and expertise of the translation team, it would have been impossible to develop this process for consensus translation. I would like to thank each of them for their assistance on the project and their comments on earlier drafts of this report: Gilbert Narro García, the Texas Mexican American translator (Center for Applied Linguistics); Reynaldo F. Macías, the California Mexican American translator (Georgetown University); Alberto Rey, the Cuban translator (Howard University); and Ivadnia Scott-Cora, the Puerto Rican translator (Howard University). I would also like to express my appreciation to Blanca Rosa Rodríguez and to Ceil Kovac of the CAL staff who also provided assistance to the team during the translation project. The support and suggestions of Walter S. Stolz, Center for Applied Linguistics, director of the larger MELP project of which the translation effort was a part, and of our project officers at the National Center for Education Statistics, Leslie Silverman and Dorothy Waggoner were extremely helpful during the project itself and in writing this report. In addition, I am grateful to Sonia Kundert and Debra Lee of the CAL staff for their assistance in typing manuscripts for the project and for this paper. I would also like to express my sincere thanks to Rudolph C. Troike, Director of the Center for Applied Linguistics, whose foresight regarding the importance and far-reaching implications of this project in addition to his encouragement and recommendations provided a strong impetus for carrying out the project and for the preparation of this paper.

L. Leann Parker
Project Coordinator
October, 1977

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CONSENSUS TRANSLATION: A SOCIOLINGUISTIC APPROACH TO THE TRANSLATION OF COMMUNITY ORIENTED DOCUMENTS

INTRODUCTION

Surveying a population as diverse as that of the United States is indeed a complicated task. The largest house-to-house survey in history, the Survey of Income and Education (SIE) which was conducted by the Bureau of the Census during the spring of 1976, proved no exception. As major decisions affecting Federal services for all minority groups were likely to be based on this Congressionally mandated survey, it was critical that the survey questionnaire be carefully designed to obtain sufficient and reliable data on these groups. Aware of the problems associated with conducting surveys among minority language groups and at the same time recognizing the value of surveying people in the language they understand best, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) decided that the SIE questionnaire should be translated into Spanish, the language of the largest minority language group in the U.S.[1]

Cubans, Dominicans, Mexicans, Mexican-Americans, Peruvians, Puerto Ricans and others are all part of the Spanish heritage population of the U.S. Closer examination reveals heterogeneity within the language and culture of these groups. How to adequately address this diversity was essentially the problem faced by the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL)[2] when NCES contracted it to prepare a Spanish translation of the SIE questionnaire. To meet this challenge, CAL developed a sociolinguistic approach to translation, which it called "consensus translation".

The whys and wherefores of the particular Spanish renderings of certain items, i.e., specific issues and problems faced in this translation, presents an interesting case study both for its implications for the SIE and for documentation of differences in U.S. varieties of Spanish. However, the process for achieving this sociolinguistically sensitive translation itself forms a potential model for future more effective translations of survey questionnaires. Thus, it is both the process and the product which are the subjects of this paper.

Language and cultural variation among Spanish-speaking groups

To understand the language and cultural variation within the U.S. Spanish-speaking populations, one must look beyond general characteristics and stereotypes. The groups are far from being homogeneous. Different geographical locations and national or political boundaries have produced very different people who nonetheless share some sort of Spanish heritage, culture, and language. Taking an obvious example, a Mexican is not a Peruvian, nor vice versa, even though both share histories of Spanish conquest, Catholicism, Indian influences, the Spanish language, and immigrants from many other nations. In each case, other impinging factors such as geography, times of immigrations, types of immigrants, foods, orientations or attitudes toward government (including political history), the indigenous Indian tribes and their contact and/or assimilation into the mainstream life of the country, and emigration patterns, and economic history coalesce to differentiate Mexicans and Peruvians from each other and from other Spanish heritage populations.

These differences are manifested in each of these populations in the United States. Yet, the differences go even further given the particular experiences each group has with American life. This is what makes Mexican Americans different from Mexicans, Puerto Ricans in New York City different from island Puerto Ricans, the Florida Cubans different from residents of Cuba. The process continues so that there are even important differences (based on location, duration, socioeconomic factors, and assimilation patterns or tendencies) which mark subgroups within the major Hispanic groups in the U.S. For example, those differences which make some Mexican heritage persons call themselves "Chicanos", while others call themselves "Mexicans", "Mexican Americans", or perhaps "Americans".

In the Southwest, numerous families can trace their residence in the area several generations, many to the period preceding U.S. occupation; many others are newly arrived immigrants (predominantly

farm workers) from Mexico. Elsewhere the Hispanic populations have other salient characteristics. The highly urbanized and generally lower income Hispanic population of the Northeast is predominantly of Puerto Rican extraction (although there are significant and increasing numbers of Dominicans and others). Cultural and language differences are recognized within the group as those of "mainlanders" and "islanders". The Cuban-origin population which predominates in Florida after the Castro revolution is generally considered well educated and socio-economically secure, although this pattern may be shifting somewhat.

Language plays an important part in any culture and is always in the process of change no matter how stable the culture appears. Language change occurs more swiftly and noticeably depending on geographical conditions and close contact with other languages. Thus, we can see differences in the Spanish of all Spanish-speaking countries. For example, the Spanish of Mexico is very much different, particularly in sounds and vocabulary, from the Spanish spoken in Spain. Evolving from the Spanish spoken at the time of the conquest, Mexico's Spanish has evolved in its own way with specific influences from such factors as contact with the Indian groups and languages and the French occupation. Meanwhile, the Spanish in Spain, influenced by quite different circumstances, has continued its evolution along another path. The Spanish of Mexico thus forms the basis of the Spanish spoken among the Mexican Americans of the Southwest. However, that Spanish is evolving differently from that spoken in Mexico owing to intensive contact with English and experiences that are peculiarly American (such as American television shows or products) rather than Mexican.

The same holds with other Hispanic populations in the U.S. Puerto Rican Spanish is different between New York City and Puerto Rico and Cuban and Puerto Rican Spanish differ from Mexican American Spanish. Thus we see such language differences as the frequently English influenced Spanish of the Southwest (e.g., "wátchale" for "watch out")

to the particular forms of other more recently arrived Spanish speaking groups. As we will see later in this paper, these kinds of differences produced many arguments among the project translators over the appropriateness of such terms as "alquilar" and "rentar" (both meaning "to rent", but each being favored by different groups) and "nomás" (a Chicano word meaning "only") and the more widely used term "solamente". It is for these reasons of cultural and linguistic diversity within a language group that CAL felt that the translation of the SIE questionnaire, as all documents, should evidence socio-linguistic sensitivity.

Translations and survey instruments

Most translators would agree that a major goal of translation is to communicate the same message in the second language as in the original. A more careful investigation into the full implications of this reveals the highly complex, intricate, and difficult nature of the process of developing a translation.[3] The completed translation itself must stand alone — a unique entity which may or may not reveal its developmental history but rather may take on new purposes, meanings, and uses depending on how its new audience perceives it.

Goals of a particular translation usually depend on the type of document that is being translated.[4] For example, a work of fiction is usually translated with an emphasis on style to capture the character given it by its particular author. An official government document, on the other hand, written in a formal variety of language is usually appropriately translated into a similarly formal variety of the second language. In the work of fiction the goal is not only to retain the meaning, descriptions, or other aspects of content but also to capture in another language those stylistic characteristics which make the work unique so that the readers can appreciate both content and some reflection of form. In the official document, meaning is primary — yet, an effort is made to preserve the stylistic aspects, namely the formality

and/or importance of the subject matter — through the use of the comparable variety used for official governmental purposes in the second language. Other types of works vary in the degree to which style and content are emphasized.

The "census-type" survey instrument is somewhat different. Like the formal document, it must gain respect from those interviewed so that they will take it seriously enough to give the needed information. Thus, in most cases, a formal variety of language is used. Yet, because the survey questionnaire is presented to its audience (individual respondents) in the form of oral questions (and instructions) rather than being read by the respondent, it establishes a conversations situation (or speech event) which usually calls for more colloquial language, structured with the specific purpose of gathering information of a rather personal nature.

Therefore, the language of the survey instrument must "communicate" in a special way with the respondent.[5] However, the translated version, while evidencing this same sensitivity, must also on occasion, for the sake of efficiency, retain rather literally the style of the original for reasons of format and scoring. This constraint forms another aspect of the way the translation eventually appears.

Furthermore, because a survey questionnaire must elicit information from a broad range of people — people from many socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds and regional orientations — it must be set in language that is understandable by them and appropriately familiar and formal or informal to elicit the necessary information. The translation of a survey questionnaire must accomplish the same objective. This has specific relevance to the American Spanish-speaking population. In order to produce a translation which would address the diversity within this population, for the CAL translators had to rely on their knowledge of both the cultural characteristics of these Hispanic groups (especially attitudes toward government surveys and language) and varieties of Spanish they speak.

THE CONSENSUS TRANSLATION PROCESS

Objectives

The translation project had two major objectives. The first was to make the Spanish both appropriate and acceptable to most of the Spanish-speaking populations in the U.S. by addressing both language varieties and cultural differences. The Spanish had to convey not only the same meaning to all Spanish-speaking groups but also the same meaning that the English version would be given to English-speaking groups. At the same time, the translation had to reflect the degree of formal or colloquial Spanish felt to be appropriate for the various groups. Thus, an "operational" version, understandable to the majority of Spanish-speakers in the U.S., was called for rather than merely a "formal" or "standard" version (since, among other things, no single definition of "standard" would apply, as each variety has its own standard).

The second objective was to make the translation as useful as possible to the Bureau of the Census, which would be conducting the survey. As data from the Spanish version would be tabulated with all the other data, the translation had to be faithful to the original English questionnaire. Moreover, since the translation was intended for use by the interviewers, it had to be formatted like the English version. Given these two objectives, CAL set out to develop and put into action a process -- and a model -- whereby such a translation could be made.

The Process

In brief, this process employed in this effort to develop a consensus translation consisted of the following steps:

(1) the selection of a team of translators who were from different U.S. Hispanic communities and were also trained linguists[6] with experience in translating.

(2) initial translation of the SIE documents into Spanish by one translator.

(3) back-translation of the documents into English by all the translators.

(4) a series of meetings of the translation team to develop and refine the translation.

Selection of the translation team

One of the most critical aspects of the process was the careful selection of a team of qualified translators. To achieve the project's goals, it was essential that each translator

- be familiar with the language of a major segment of the U.S. Spanish-speaking population,
- be familiar with both formal and colloquial varieties of Spanish,
- be sensitive to the sociolinguistic issues involved,
- have formal training in linguistics, and
- have prior experience in translation.

Although there are numerous Spanish-speaking populations represented in the U.S., CAL addressed only the three major ones (the Mexican-American, the Puerto Rican, and the Cuban) in order to limit the number of translators to a workable size. A team of four translators meeting the above criteria was assembled: a Mexican-American from rural Texas and one from urban California (two Mexican-Americans were selected both because of the regional language differences and because of the size of the population), one Puerto Rican, and one Cuban.

Working with this team was a bilingual team coordinator from the CAL staff who was responsible for coordinating the meetings and recording the consensus translation as it evolved. Other persons working with the team included the Federal project monitors, whose familiarity with the SIE questionnaire, government terminology, and Spanish was helpful in explicating the English and determining acceptable translations for particular items, and the CAL project director for the overall project of which the translation effort was a part.[7]

Initial Spanish translation

Three major documents were to be translated: the SIE questionnaire, the interviewer control card, and a letter to introduce the interviewer and the survey to the respondent. In order to have a tangible place to begin, it was decided to have one of the translators make an initial translation of the documents. Although separate translations by all the translators might have been used as a point of departure, it was felt that melding three or four separate translations would be more difficult and time-consuming than having everyone focus on one translation and working toward consensus from this.

After orienting the team to the goals and schedule of the project and the importance of the SIE, the coordinator assigned one translator to make this first translation. He was the only one allowed at first to see the English version of the documents. Written almost entirely in the local variety of the translator's population, this translation provided a good starting point, raising questions about what the final product should be like and setting in motion the highly interactive process of achieving a consensus translation.

Back-translation

The next step in the process was to have each of the other three translators work independently to retranslate the initial Spanish version into English, still without access to the original version. This allowed them to familiarize themselves with the documents -- the types of questions, the format, and so forth. It also allowed them to check the variety of Spanish and cultural considerations evidenced in this first draft for acceptability with their own. Later when the translators compared their English versions with the original, it allowed additional possibilities for making sure that the Spanish version was communicating the same messages as the English version. An interesting and unanticipated outcome was that the team was also able to spot more readily ambiguities and awkward constructions in the English version -- thus helping them to be even more certain that the final translation was as accurate as possible.

Working toward consensus

The team then worked closely to reach consensus on such things as conventions, standardization, desired degree of formality or informality of the Spanish, and specific vocabulary or best translation for particular items. Standard translating aids such as dictionaries, or other official U.S. documents which had already been translated into Spanish, and resource persons were also employed in the process. As the dynamics of the translation process unfolded, many linguistic issues and questions were deliberated and resolved. Some problems (such as those imposed by the requirement to adhere to the format of the English version) were never quite resolved, as they were beyond the control of the team. Extensive reviewing and proofing took place to ensure consistency and appropriateness of the translation. This brief summary would never be able to capture the real dynamics that occurred -- the arguments, the introspections, the changes, the negotiations -- all the factors necessary for achieving a consensus on questions of cultural and linguistic diversity. Discussion of some of the major issues and problems and implications of the model follows.

ISSUES AND PROBLEMS

Numerous questions and issues had to be confronted and resolved during the translation process. After developing certain conventions or standard guidelines for the translation, the real negotiations on various issues. Most of the issues centered on style and terms favored by the speakers of the different varieties of Spanish. These issues provide not only rationales for particular translation decisions but also lend insight into the cultural and linguistic differences between U.S. Spanish-speaking population.

Conventions

Conventions were established early to facilitate the work of the team and to help standardize results. Most of the conventions were guidelines for format within the translation itself, such as when to include alternative forms of a word (e.g., "normalmente/por lo regular"

["normally", "usually"]; "jubilado/retirado" ["retired"]; "mudarse/moverse" ["to move"]; or "fuerzas armadas/ejército" ["armed forces"]), when to clarify ambiguities in the English (for example in a question regarding type of employer [item 43A of the questionnaire] the general term "employer" was translated as " Para quién trabaja?" ["¿Who does he work for?"] rather than "patrón" which has a more restricted meaning in Spanish ("patrón" refers specifically to the head of a company or a shop owner, whereas "employer" can refer not only to the person but the company as well).

It was felt that since the interviewer would be trained in English and would be familiar with the format of the English version of the documents, instructions regarding the "skip" patterns, coding procedures, etc., should remain in English. However, those instructions which might involve some verbal explanation to the respondent were translated in order to assist with technical terms, since even fluent native Spanish speakers would not necessarily know these terms or might not use the same ones. For example, if item 47 on the questionnaire, the interviewer is asked to make the respondent differentiate between state or local welfare payments and Federal ones: the accompanying note emphasizing this distinction to the interviewer was translated so that he might make this explanation in Spanish if necessary.

Where possible, accepted translations were used (i.e., "accepted" by virtue of their appearing in previously translated Government documents. For example, "Department of Health, Education and Welfare" was translated into the usual form "Departmento de Salud, Educación y Bienestar" (whereas in many Spanish speaking countries, national government agencies are frequently called "ministerios" ["ministries"]). Where this was not possible, an appropriate translation (such as, "welfare" being translated "bienestar público") was developed. In either case, the English term or name was also included to avoid confusion, e.g., bienestar público ("welfare").

Problems of style

The subtle criteria used by the team to reach consensus on matters of style such as formal versus colloquial forms, anglicisms versus

Spanish forms, regional forms versus more widely used forms; literal translations versus non-literal ones, are difficult to pinpoint, and varied somewhat from item to item. Decisions were based in large part on "give and take" and varied depending on the translators' educated linguistic judgments on general comprehensibility and community acceptance of a particular version. A word or phrase or construction which might have seemed inappropriate on one question may have been deemed totally appropriate within the context of a different item. Problems of stylistics resulted primarily from the following: immediate translations triggered by the use of a English term or phrase; regionalisms or terms peculiar to one variety of Spanish; awkwardly or ambiguously phrased English in the original; perceptions of necessary formality; anglicisms; shifts in style in the English version; technical terms in English and/or differing semantic domains of similar English and Spanish terms.

The English wording of some of the items often triggered some specific translations, even if there were a number of correct or appropriate alternatives in Spanish. For example, the word "occasionally" immediately brought to the mind of at least one translator the acceptable Spanish word "ocasionalmente". Equally acceptable is "de vez en cuando" It is not known empirically whether the selection of one or the other would cause different responses from the respondent anymore than whether the English version used "sometimes" in the same place would evoke a different response from English speakers. (It should be noted that since "de vez en cuando" was preferred by translators who felt it was more "Spanish", it was selected for use in the translation over "ocasionalmente".)

Regionalisms or forms of particular varieties of Spanish were closely examined for their appropriateness and acceptability.[8] Some problems resulted from trying to determine how widely used or acceptable a term might be. In this regard, the Chicano term "nomás" ("only") was not used in the translation, since it is infrequently used in the other two varieties. Other semantic differences were confronted when some words carried divergent meaning in the different varieties. Usage

and/or semantic differences affected terms like the following:

Army/"Ejército": The English term "army/armed forces" was translated as "fuerzas armadas" even though it was felt this was perhaps too literal a translation of the English. The Puero Rican and Cuban translators preferred "ejército" although in most varieties the term is restricted to "army" and does not include the other services such as the navy. "El militar" was not generally accepted by any of the translators. (See item 30 on the questionnaire.)

Public school/"Escuela regular": It was decided that "escuela regular" rather than "escuela pública" (which is frequently used in the Southwest was the most commonly understood term. (See item 22A on the control card.)

Kindergarten/"Kindergarten" (or "kinder"): is a fairly widely accepted term in the U.S. Spanish for what we consider kindergarten, whereas, "jardín de niños" and casa de cuna" are terms primarily used in Mexico. (See item 22A on the control card.)

Living quarters/"Habitación/vivienda": On the back of the control card, in reference to "living quarters", both "habitación" and "vivienda" were considered. However, "vivienda" was selected because for the Cuban and Puerto Rican translators "habitación" had a more restricted meaning of "bedroom" whereas it was more general according to the Mexican-American translators. Both alternatives were given, however, in item 105 of the questionnaire.

"Ocupada": Again, on the back of the control card under "living quarters use the characteristics of living quarters" the word "habitada" ("inhabited") rather than "ocupada" was chosen since "ocupada" also carries other connotations of "occupied" or "busy".

Where awkardly or ambiguously written English posed translation problems, the translators decided to follow the English as closely as possible. Rather than indicating a verbatim translation (i.e., retaining the English syntax and semantic system but substituting Spanish words), this meant that the Spanish should reflect the style of the English even if it resulted in a poorly phrased question.[9] This decision allowed the translators more easily to adhere to format considerations. Occasionally the translators did try to "improve" on the English in order to avoid unnecessary ambiguities in Spanish (for example: both gender forms were included on appropriate nouns in Spanish, or both "padre" and

"madre" were specified for "parent", since although "padre" can mean "parent" its usual meaning is "father".)

Considerations of formality of usage arose primarily in discussions of communities' perceptions of Government surveys. According to the Puerto Rican and Cuban translators, their communities being more accustomed to Government surveys and documents in Spanish, would more likely expect the highly formal or the official-sounding Spanish which was used for those purposes in their countries. However, the Mexican American translators contended that formal usage was not so appropriate for their community, since there is little tradition of surveying in any kind of Spanish much less, formal Spanish, and since many Mexican American Spanish speakers are not familiar with that type of Spanish. From these discussions questions arose which are not easily answered, such as questions about the cultural expectations for language use on a survey such as this and how those expectations vary across Spanish-speaking communities; how these expectations vary from regional expectations of English- and other non-Spanish speakers; and whether a formal variety of the language should be used at the risk of not communicating with a group which is not familiar with it.[10] Such questions beleaguered the CAL translators and await further research for guidance in future translations.

The question of the appropriateness of using anglicisms (i.e., words borrowed from English) in a Spanish translation arose frequently. Like the problems concerning formality, this is not a light question. There is almost no sociolinguistic research to answer questions regarding such matters as when a foreign word becomes part of another language. For example, the word "planta" ("plant" or "shop" -- see item 12C of the questionnaire) is frequently used in Southwest Chicano Spanish, yet apparently is not used to the same degree among the U.S. Cuban and Puerto Rican communities, who prefer "fábrica". It might also be noted that Spanish itself is an amalgam of many other languages including Latin, Greek, and Arabic. Indeed it was quickly agreed that "kindergarten" was acceptable (although it was borrowed from the German

by both English and Spanish) which objections were raised to words like "rentar" (a word derived from the French, a Romance language kin to Spanish) because of phonological similarity to the English. (Note that in the instance two alternatives, "alquilar" and "rentar", were listed so that the interviewer could use the one most appropriate to his community -- see item 104 on the questionnaire.) Questions over the degree that U.S. varieties of Spanish differ from those in their mother countries and how "standard" or prestigious or widely used they are (e.g., whether they are as "standard" as white Boston or white southern English is compared to the British R.P. -- "received pronunciation", or when Black Vernacular English is compared to white midwestern English) also remain to be answered by researchers.

The English version, with its shifts between formal and colloquial language, presented additional difficulties, particularly when Spanish does not make corresponding shifts. For example, there are not correspondingly colloquial terms to "checked with" in reference to applying for work with someone or "stretch" in reference to a "period of work", or to terms like "keeping house". Therefore, the translators used acceptable Spanish wordings of such phrases, assuming that it would not affect the reliability of the responses. Thus, "checked with" (item 14A of the questionnaire) became "busco empleo con ..." ["looked for a job with ..."]; "stretch" (item 34 of the questionnaire) was translated as "un período continuo" ("a continous period"); and "two stretches" was translated as "dos períodos separados" ("two separate periods"). "Keeping house" (item 11 of the questionnaire) was rendered "trabajando en la casa" ("working in the house") rather than "oficios domésticos" (something akin to "domestic duties" which seemed a little more stiff -- yet neither exactly conveys all that "keeping house" in English does).

Technical terms in English presented a difficult problem. Either Spanish-speaking countries have not developed equivalent terminology in

Spanish, or no appropriate official standardized translations have been developed for these terms in the United States. Therefore, the translators frequently adopted common words from Spanish, and thus rather arbitrarily turned the Spanish words into technical terms.[11] Occasionally they used both a Spanish translation and the English term itself, since the technical English terms might be as well or better known to the U.S. Spanish-speaking communities than some arbitrary translation would be. Examples of these include the following:

Household/Living Quarters: These terms were used throughout the questionnaire and the control card, and carry a specific meaning to the Bureau of the Census. They cover the notion of living quarters which may or may not include inhabitants. Neither has an exact translation in Spanish. The closest approximation was "domicilio" although "vivienda" was also considered. For the purposes of this survey, "domicilio" had to take on the special semantic features of the English word "household" and drop others that might be peculiar to Spanish. However, on the back of the control card, "vivienda" was used to describe "living quarters", since the first question was actually describing rooms or the construction of the building in which the household was living. "Vivienda" seems to connote the actual construction of a building as does the English term in this context of living quarters which appears on the back of the control card. Therefore, #5 on the control card was translated " Viven y comen con cualquier otro grupo de gente los habitantes de esta vivienda?" Further, in order to indicate all the living quarters within a particular domicile, it was determined that "all quarters" was best translated as "Para toda vivienda habitada y no habitada" (in other words, "for every living quarter, whether lived in or not lived in"). This would indicate to the respondent that he should given information about all living quarters in the "domicile" or household including extra space where people might be living but were not at the present time.

Public housing: In order to avoid misunderstanding both a translation and the English version were used her "vivienda pública". (See item 103 of the questionnaire.)

Food stamps: This term was translated in a rather amplified form ("estampillas de comida del gobierno") and because it seemed self-explanatory, the English term was not included. (See item 95 of the questionnaire.)

Lodger: This word is used by the Bureau of the Census to indicate all of the people staying or living in the household who do not belong to the immediate family. There is no single term for this concept in Spanish. The Mexican American translators preferred "huésped", which

can also mean "guest", its major connotation for the Puerto Rican and Cuban translators. The latter preferred "inquilino" which connotes "renter", and this was added as an alternate to "huésped". (See item 13 on the control card.)

College: "Academic college" was translated "colegio universitario/universidad", although "colegio académico" was also suggested. The translators in this case were not certain of the intent of the English that is, whether "college" here was intended to refer to any type of post-secondary education. Were this the case, the term for junior college would have had to be added in the Spanish, since "colegio universitario/universidad" specifically connotes university and any type of higher academic education. Because only "academic" was specified in the English version, the translators felt that the emphasis of this question was to gather information on university-type training rather than vocational or any kind of post-secondary educations and so decided to use the term with that connotation in Spanish. (See item 22A on the control card.)

Labor dispute: "Labor dispute" which was first translated as "disputa obrera" was changed to "problemas obrero-patronales" principally because it seemed that a labor dispute actually implies a labor-management dispute and does not necessarily imply negative aspects about labor. It was also noted that the word "disputa" is not often used in Spanish because a slight slip in pronunciation yields a word avoided in polite conversation. (See item 12 of the questionnaire.)

Temporary layoff: As there is no equivalent term meaning "laid-off" in Spanish, the idea had to be translated. Thus, "temporeramente ausente o dejado cesante" was used, followed with the English term. It was felt that this was necessary because Spanish-speaking workers in the U.S. might be more familiar with the English term rather than a Spanish translation of it. (See item 13 of the questionnaire.)

Penalty: In the letter of introduction there is a statement saying that there will be no penalty for not responding to a question. The closest Spanish word to "penalty" is "castigo" however, because the translators felt that this term might seem harsher to Spanish speakers than what the English term conveys, they decided to change the whole sentence in Spanish. The translation agreed upon was "Participación en la encuesta es voluntaria y si hay alguna pregunta a la cual no quiere responder no tiene que responder" ["Participation in the survey is voluntary, and if there is a question that you do not want to respond to, you do not have to answer it."]

In order to grapple with the problems of translation without pre-established answers to such questions, each translator had to rely on his sociolinguistic knowledge, his background in linguistics, his own

experiences with his community, the variety of Spanish he speaks, and his previous experiences with translating different types of materials. Neither did nor could the translators presume to act as final arbiters on their variety of Spanish. Instead they sought to provide the translation with flexibility and sensitivity to many varieties of Spanish so that it could be used effectively in all Spanish-speaking communities. The consensus translation, like the "consensus process" itself, must be operational and flexible.

CONCLUSION: APPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The consensus translation process demonstrated in the CAL project provides a potential model for all large scale surveys involving Spanish-speaking groups. The passage of P.L. 94-311 in June 1976, which mandates among other things, that surveys conducted among the Spanish-speaking population of the U.S. must include instruments in Spanish and bilingual interviewers, underscores the need for more accurate translations which at the same time are sociolinguistically appropriate for a broad range of Spanish-speaking groups. At stake are Government services and Federal funding based on pictures of need which the various surveys are designed to reveal.

It is not clear how applicable this process might be in developing translations for any public document in other minority languages. Certainly the size of any variety within a particular minority language group would be a factor in determining whether or not the time and expense of a consensus translation process is justifiable. French (which includes the different varieties of French found in New England, Louisiana, and Haiti) and Portuguese (which includes the Portuguese varieties found in Portugal, the Azores, and Brazil) might be appropriate candidates for use in a consensus translation. Although many of the Chinese languages such as Cantonese and Mandarin are mutually unintelligible they share a largely common writing system which might lend itself to uses if the respondents were allowed or were able to read the questionnaires and if interviewers who speak those languages were

hired (this would, however, not resolve problems which might be engendered by coding systems, etc.). Problems would also appear with other Asian communities, such as the Filipino, which has numerous mutually unintelligible language and no commonly understood writing system but a rather generalized "national" culture. Native American languages share this situation with the additional problem that many of these languages are not written, and few speakers can read them.

Even where a fairly homogeneous group such as the population of the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico is to be surveyed, the consensus process is relevant, since the language of the survey instruments needs to be made intelligible to the community. A translation such as the one prepared by the Commonwealth Department of Labor, paralleling the SIE, addresses this situation well, as it not only reflects the language and expectations of that population but it asks locally relevant questions. It should be pointed out, however, that just because a translation is locally developed, it is not necessarily linguistically accurate or sociolinguistically sensitive, unless a consensus approach has been used. Any such translation should include review and input from the communities to be affected.

The CAL project also brought to light a number of needs which should be explored further in order to make the process more effective. Among these needs are the following:

Specialized glossaries: The Bureau of the Census or the Federal Government as a whole might wish to consider developing "official" glossaries in different languages and guidelines for Federal translators. This would greatly assist in standarizing translations of terms such as "household", "lay-off", "welfare", and Governmental titles such as "Department of Health, Education and Welfare". Since there has been no concerted or consistent effort to develop such translations or to determine which terms are better known in English rather than in Spanish, translators must of necessity work on an ad hoc basis. No doubt as the demand for translations increases such glossaries will be developed.

Additional research: Not only must linguistic and sociolinguistic research on the different varieties of U.S. minority languages be encouraged and conducted (so that translators will have a sounder base of knowledge and more appropriate glossaries from which to work), but also additional anthropological and sociolinguistic research is needed to give more perspective to the cultures and languages to which the surveys will be directed. This has special relevance to the initial construction of survey questions which will retrieve the most accurate data possible. Differences in socio-economic and educational levels within each group and relevant geographical factors must be considered. Language surveys and descriptions must be developed for these languages. Field testing of translations to determine reliability is essential.

Development of guidelines for translations: Guidelines for future translations are necessary for maintaining quality and appropriateness. It is possible that such guidelines might differ depending on the particular cultural group and the language or language variety used. An important aspect which must not be overlooked in the matter of translation is that language varieties (and culture) are in a constant state of change, particularly when in contact with other languages and cultures. Thus strict "standards" for translations of survey instruments cannot be set although they may be suggested. Recognition of/or allowances for variations and changes in language and language use will always be necessary in the development of appropriate translations.

Use of community reactions: Close attention must be paid to societal factors and to varieties of the target language. To ensure the effectiveness of the survey instruments, developers and translators must consider how the survey will be received by particular communities and how different wordings of items may affect analysis of the data. The variety of a language (e.g., formal or colloquial), and the style of expressing the content (complex and/or ambiguous or clear and straightforward) can communicate more messages than the ostensible content might at first indicate. The project revealed that the audience's interpretations may differ according to their cultural experiences, and it appears that different cultural views of government and how it is supposed to act or be respresented are subtly reflected in these sociolinguistic judgments.

Provision of special training for bilingual interviewers: Because effectively translated survey instruments form only part of the data collection process, the training of bilingual interviewers assumes great importance. Usually the Bureau of the Census has met this problem by having interviewers solicit the help of bilingual neighbors or relatives of the respondents or by hiring bilingual interviewers when possible. Occasionally, Census has hired someone to translate the questionnaire -- usually only into Spanish. Further, it has conducted some field testing of the Spanish version of the 1980 census questionnaire. Yet, the point remains that merely because an interviewer is bilingual does not mean that he is sensitive to, much less consciously aware of the crucial role that language variety and culture play in gathering data for a survey. Special training programs must be provided for bilingual interviewers and for monolingual English interviewers who must work in areas in which there are persons of other language and cultural backgrounds.[12]

Development of more easily translatable questionnaires: Deciding at the outset that a questionnaire will be translated into a specific language or languages will assist in the overall preparation of the translation if for no other reason than sufficient time and money can be allocated to the preparation of a careful and sensitive translation. For all its value as a model, the consensus translation process requires more time and money to allow several translators the opportunity to do their work well than the traditional one translator process. Moreover, were translators allowed to work with the questionnaire developers early in the preparation of the questionnaire, it might be possible to resolve some of the frustrations of translation brought on by such things as awkward English syntax or coding procedures for a particular item before the translation is finally developed.[13]

No translation of a survey questionnaire can be expected to please everyone. Yet, efforts to address the sociolinguistic variation within a language group will improve the chances for satisfaction with the translation. More importantly, it may improve the validity and reliability of the data gathered, to the ultimate benefit of that population. The "consensus translation" approach is a step towards that goal.

NOTES

1. The Spanish-speaking population in the U.S. is large, approximately 11.2 million (or about 5% of the overall population) according to a 1975 Current Population Survey. Although the population is spread across the country, concentrations fall in the Southwest, Florida, and New York City and Chicago. The population is generally characterized by low income and education levels and a high number of limited-English speakers. According to Dorothy Waggoner's analysis of the 1975 Current Population Survey data, approximately 9,904,000 persons reported their household language as Spanish out of a total of 25,344,000 (see Dorothy Waggoner, 'NCES' Survey of Languages", The Linguistic Reporter, vol. 19, no. 3, December 1976).

   As Spanish-speakers comprise the largest minority language group in the U.S. and thus might be assumed to be the minority language group which would be most affected by the SIE findings, Spanish was selected as the target language. For various reasons (including time and financial constraints), the instruments were not translated into other languages.

2. The Center for Applied Linguistics of Arlington, Virginia is a private, non-profit national organization devoted to the application of linguistic theory and research to practical problems and educational policy.

3. For discussions of problems associated with translation, see Eugene A. Nida, Language Structure and Translation, Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1975. Another good discussion may be found in Richard W. Brislin, ed., Translation: Applications and Research, New York: Gardner Press, Inc., 1976. Also see Oswald Werner and Donald T. Campbell, "Translating, Working Through Interpreters, and the Problem of Decentering," in Raoule Naroll and Ronald Cohen, eds., A Handbook of Method in Cultural Anthropology, New York: Columbia University Press, 1973, pp. 398-420, and Eugene A. Nida, Toward a Scientific Theory of Translating, New York: J. J. Brill, 1964.

4. In his "Introduction" to Translation (1976), Brislin, refers to Casagrande's typology of translation: "pragmatic" -- focusing on accuracy of information; "esthetic-poetic" -- focusing on aurthor's style as well as information; "ethnographic" -- focusing on cultural contexts of the source documents; and "linguistic" -- focusing on equivalent meanings within morphemes (parts of words which carry meaning), as with computer translation.

5. Of course, some of the burden of communication must be borne by the interviewer, which brings up the issue of inter-rater reliability. The interviewer's words must not deviate substantially from the questionnaire, or consequently interviewer reliability, the data collected, and the conclusions based on it may be undependable. This issue is further complicated by the use of bilingual interviewers, since the use of bilingual interviewers transforms the translation into a type of interpretation (in the technical sense of the word). Therefore, special interviewer training, in addition to a careful, sensitive translation, is essential for ensuring that full reliable, and comparable data is received from both the original and the translated versions.

6. Here and elsewhere in this paper, the term "linguist" refers to a practitioner in linguistics, which is the scientific study of language. It does not refer to a person who speaks more than one language.

7. This translation project was a subproject conducted as part of the Center's overall contract to develop what was commonly called a "measure of English language proficiency" (MELP) — a set of census-type questions which would reliably estimate large numbers of persons of limited English-speaking ability in the Survey of Income and Education.

8. For additional information on varieties of Spanish and on linguistic problems associated with Spanish and English see: Veronica Gonzalez-Mena de Lococo's article, "The Salient Differences Between Chicano Spanish and Standard Spanish: Some Pedagogical Considerations" (The Bilingual Review, vol. I, no. 3, September-December 1974, pp. 234-251) which gives some good examples of phonological, syntactic, and sociolinguisitic variations between formal Spanish and a regional variety. Such examples underscore the need for attention to linguistic differences in preparation of the most effective materials (including questionnaires) for these populations.

   J.S. Bernstein also points out particular difficulties of translation from English to Spanish, particularly in cases in which English syntax is rather informal, in "On the Semantics of Certain English Phrasal Verbs and Their Rendering into Spanish" (The Bilingual Review, vol. I, no. 1, April 1974, pp. 59-66).

9. It was reasoned that if English speakers had to suffer through the syntax the Spanish speakers should too for the sake of comparability of results from both versions. It should be noted that this decision was based on intuition — language scholars do not know whether speakers from one language background can process awkward syntax or certain types of awkward or complex syntax more readily than speakers from another language background. In any event this factor could have important implications for determining validity and reliability of an instrument.

One possible resolution to this problem would be a field test of the Spanish version and a comparison of the results with those from a field test of the English version. However, the Bureau of the Census had no plans to conduct such an experiment for the SIE. Therefore, the team had to be as careful as possible to foresee and avoid possible problems of this type.

10. One might also ask whether monolingual English speaking Americans in different areas of the country and/or at different socioeconomic levels respond better to more formal or informal language (e.g., "a period of time" instead of "a stretch") as a standard variety or as opposed to a more local variety (e.g., "ailment" versus "illness/disease").

11. A somewhat philosophical issue arises with regards to translation of survey instruments and the implications for reliability and validity of the instrument. By the act of translating certain technical terms from English into Spanish (e.g., "household") the translators were, in effect, responsible for making a Spanish term (e.g., "domicilio") take on a technical reference which it might not usually carry in Spanish. Thus, the respondents would have to expand the semantic domain for their understanding of this response. Using terms such as these consistently throughout the translation, the translators could attempt to effect this technicalization of terms. However, they recognized that they were in effect creating a new questionnaire, which was similar to (particularly in purpose and format) but not necessarily identical to (in terms of validity and reliability) the original English version.

12. The Census Bureau agreed to hire as many Spanish-English bilinguals as possible in known areas of concentration of Spanish speakers for the purposes of this survey.

    Recommendations for training interviewers (bilingual and monolingual) in language and cultural sensitivity were not requested, but CAL recognizes that this is an important, although often overlooked, aspect of gathering valid data.

13. Werner and Campbell (1973) have suggested techniques for this -- a brief explanation of this process of decentering in developing translatable English in questionnaires may be found in Brislin's "Introduction" to Translation: Applications and Research, op.cit.

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